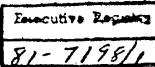


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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505



8 May 1981

The Honorable Caspar W. Weinberger
The Secretary of Defense
Room 3E880
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Cap,

I'm sure you are aware of the controversy concerning some of the assessments which have appeared in the annual NIE 11-3/8 on Soviet capabilities for strategic nuclear conflict. Shortly after I assumed my present post, I brought in Paul Nitze to make recommendations concerning the type of assessments which should be done for use in the NIE. To this end, Paul has proposed that he conduct a short-term study (60-120 days) with the objective of making the best possible judgment on how the Soviets assess the capability of their nuclear forces to carry out their missions, now and at various times in the future. Such an effort, assuming it is successful, could be extraordinarily valuable, and could grow into a continuing program. Indeed, the credibility of our deterrent rests on the Soviet assessment of the strategic balance, not ours.

Paul's plan is to try to approximate the Soviet Defense establishment's planning for nuclear war with the United States and its allies. He expects to gather together a group of knowledgeable people, to recommend who should be tasked to do the necessary research and analysis, and generally to assist in making judgments about Soviet choices in areas where we lack evidence. The plan is to use people in government and private industry. Paul's description of the objectives of the study and an outline of the proposed content are attached.

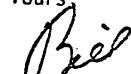
I am prepared to provide such inputs as are available from intelligence, to fund the needed contractor analysis, and to provide a full-time senior official to manage the effort under Paul Nitze's direction. I feel, however, that the study ought to be jointly sponsored by intelligence and defense, because the effort will require a heavy input from non-intelligence sources. Also, the study should not be tied in with our production of the annual NIE 11-3/8, at least for the present. I view Paul's effort as an experiment, and do not wish to have the production of this year's NIE contingent on the results of the study.

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If you agree that the study is worth doing, then I propose that we form a steering group composed of representatives from your office, the Joint Chiefs, DIA, and CIA. This group, to be chaired by Paul Nitze, would be asked to monitor progress so that the effort stays on track, and to overcome any bureaucratic obstacles which may arise. Further, I suggest that the individuals selected as representatives be senior officials in their respective organizations.

Please let me know whether you agree with this plan, and if you concur, who you would nominate to serve as members of the steering group.

Yours,



William J. Casey

Attachment

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LETTER TO The Honorable Caspar W. Weinberger

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